

## OBITUARY

**Thomas Claude Marshall**

1896–1976

Tom Marshall was born in Brisbane 2nd January, 1896 and died in his home city on 30th June, 1976. Although the latter part of his career was in the Fisheries Section, Department of Harbours and Marine, he was for 32 years, an enthusiastic staff member of the Queensland Museum. He contributed a great deal during a period of staff shortages and difficulties of many kinds.

He joined the Queensland Museum in 1910 and even at this age had a small collection of insects, fish and birds. This early interest in Natural History developed into a life work, culminating in his study of the Great Barrier Reef and Queensland fishes.

On 15th January, 1912, Tom Marshall was appointed as a Cadet. Under the influence of Anthony Alder, he soon learnt to produce excellent casts of fish and other natural history specimens and to paint them in life-like colours. Many of the scores of specimens he prepared are still on display in the fish gallery of the Queensland Museum.

After World War I, in which Marshall served with the 13th Australian General Hospital Unit, he continued his work at the Queensland Museum and became closely associated with the Ichthyologist, James Douglas Ogilby. This association fired his enthusiasm for the collection, classification and nomenclature of Queensland fishes, an enthusiasm that was shared with his friend George Coates, of Townsville, who collected and donated to the Queensland Museum many hundreds of fish specimens. Coates painted excellent water-colours of tropical fish, many of which were later published by Marshall, and he was undoubtedly a major influence as Marshall developed his own expertise in the preparation of coloured sketches of fish as an aid in identification and for the painting of casts.

In the mid 1920's Tom Marshall founded the 'Aquarium and Terrarium Society of Queensland' and was the society's first President. At about this stage he made a study of Conchology and derived much pleasure from his shell collection until the end of his life.

By the late 1930's his interest turned to film making. His two colour films, 'Enchanted Regions of the Great Barrier Reef', 1939, and 'Roving Coral Seas', 1940, were very successful and were widely shown throughout Queensland and interstate.

These films aroused public interest in the animals of the reefs and the beauty of the coral cays and islands. Considerable help and encouragement was provided for Tom Marshall at this time by the Director of the Queensland Museum, Mr Heber A. Longman.

He collected widely on his many trips to the islands of the Great Barrier Reef. In 1938, with E. G. Ogg, an Honorary Collector, he collected fish specimens at Prince of Wales and Yorke Islands in the Torres Straits and during October–November of the same year, Marshall collected and surveyed the fishes of the Barcoo and Thompson Rivers of Western Queensland.

Marshall was appointed Artificer and Modeller on 1st July, 1925 and he held this position for nearly 17 years even though much of his work was research on Queensland fishes.

In 1939, he was awarded a Carnegie Scholarship to study abroad but this was held over due to World War II, and afterwards, because of his age, he was precluded from proceeding with the scholarship.

On the 6th March, 1942, he was seconded to the Fisheries Section, Department of Harbours and Marine and on the 6th May, 1943 was appointed Assistant Chief Inspector of Fisheries. Nearly three years later, now Ichthyologist, he was in charge of the scientific studies in his department, the position he held until his retirement in 1962. For many years, and until the time of his death, Marshall was a member of the Great Barrier Reef Committee. His enthusiasm for the Queensland Museum never waned, and he took great pleasure in the new displays for he had always had a flair for this side of museology.

His papers on various ichthyological subjects were published in the Memoirs of the Queensland Museum, and in Ichthyological Notes of the Department of Harbours and Marine. His *magnum opus*, 'Fishes of the Great Barrier Reef and the Coastal Waters of Queensland' appeared after his retirement in 1964 and remains to the present, a valuable textbook for the scientist and layman alike. George Coates' beautiful plates of fishes are printed in this work.

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Portrait of Tom C. Marshall by Percy Eagles, published in 'Truth' newspaper, 24th July 1960. Reproduced by kind permission of 'Sunday Sun'.

Tom Marshall was a friendly man of out-going personality with a repertoire of humorous stories and anecdotes of earlier days at the Queensland Museum.

Behind most important men there is often an inspiring woman, and in Marshall's life it was his wife, Dot. Formerly Dorothea Agnes O'Donnell, she contributed very considerably in providing a happy home in which they reared one son and three

daughters. On the innumerable occasions when interstate and international scientists and Ichthyologists were invited to his home at Eagle Junction she was an untiring hostess. To his wife Dorothea, his son Walter and his daughters Thelma, Gwen and Audrey we extend our sincere sympathy.

D. P. VERNON.  
Queensland Museum